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C O N F I D E N T I A L MOSCOW 003008

SIPDIS

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TAGS: PGOV PREL RS AF

SUBJECT: AFGHANS WANT MORE THAN EMPTY PROMISES FROM MOSCOW

REF: MOSCOW 02497

Classified By: Acting Political M/C David Kostelancik for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Embassy Moscow DAO representatives and Poloff met with General-Lieutenant Mohammad Sharif Akram, Military and Air Attache, and Colonel Abdullah Andar, Deputy Military and Air Attache, of the Embassy of Afghanistan to the Russian Federation to discuss the GOR's support for stabilizing Afghanistan. Noting that GOR officials at all levels, both in Russia and abroad, had often talked about assisting Afghanistan, he remarked that he had seen little fulfillment of their promises. Akram remarked that he had been in Moscow for three years and had not seen any evidence that the GOR was living up to its offers of assistance. He recalled that former Russian Ambassador Zamir Kabulov, who departed Kabul in October, had also delivered empty words and misrepresentations. (Note: Kabulov remains an important figure in the GOR's Afghanistan policy as the current head of the MFA's Second Asia division.)

¶2. (C) Akram began by noting the linkage of stability in Afghanistan to stability in Russia. He claimed that unrest in Afghanistan could easily spread through Central Asia and cause problems in Russia that the GOR would have difficulty resolving. Akram said that, while it was unlikely Moscow would reach the level of support provided by Washington, he expected their support to be similar to the assistance provided by European nations.

¶3. (C) Akram recognized that the GOR had donated to the ANSF in the past and had funded training programs at military academies. He reported that the GOR had sponsored 14 Afghan Army cadets at military academies in Russia in fields such as engineering, medicine and finance. Unfortunately, when 10 additional students applied, the GOA was asked to pay for the cadets' courses. When asked about the suggested list of equipment donations (reftel) drafted by CSTC-A and delivered to the GOR in October, Akram said he believed the Russians could easily provide anything on the list. He did not comment on the appropriateness of the list or if any of the items were needed by the ANSF. Akram emphasized that the GOA was seeking donations from Moscow and was not looking to buy weapons, spare parts or other items.

¶4. (C) Offering praise and hope for the new U.S. strategy in Afghanistan, Akram commented that it was important to engage Pakistan and stop the funding and support for extremist elements based there. He lamented that the Pakistani government (like the GOR) often said one thing but did another, especially in the struggle against al Qaeda. The situation in Pakistan was a "dangerous game" because of Pakistan's nuclear weapons. He predicted that Afghanistan could be quickly stabilized once the support system for extremists in Pakistan was destroyed.

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